

Message Text

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73-60

ACTION OC-06

INFO OCT-01 AF-05 ISO-00 CCO-00 OPR-02 A-01 AID-20 /035 W

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R 161450Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO USCINCEUR

COMSIXTHFLT

INFO CINCUSNAVEUR

SECSTATE WASHDC 4204

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 280

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SWEL, TS

SUBJECT: COMMUNICATIONS DURING DECEMBER 1973 TUNISIAN FLOODS

REF: A) COMSIXTHFLT 241547Z DEC 73 (NOTAL)

B) USCINCEUR 221025Z DEC 73 (NOTAL)

1. AS ADDRESSEES AWARE, THIS EMBASSY EXPERIENCED VARIETY OF COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS AT TIME OF DECEMBER FLOODS BOTH IN OUR EFFORTS GET IN TOUCH WITH COMSIXTHFLT URGENTLY AT OUTSET AND IN ATTEMPTING MAINTAIN SATISFACTORY COMMUNICATIONS AMONG ALL USG DISASTER RELIEF ELEMENTS ONCE HELICOPTERS HAD ARRIVED IN TUNISIA. PURPOSE THIS MESSAGE IS TO IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND TO REQUEST YOUR ASSISTANCE IN ATTEMPTING RESOLVE THEM SO AS PRECLUDE THEIR REOCCURENCE IN FUTURE.

2. AT BEGINNING OF EMERGENCY, AMBASSADOR TRIED ESTABLISH VOICE CONTACT WITH COMSIXTHFLT TO DISCUSS PROBLEM WITH HIM DIRECTLY. ACCORDINGLY, WE TELEPHONED COMSIXTHFLT AT GAETA AND SIMULTANEOUSLY ENDEAVORED RAISE HIM ON SSB USING CHANNELS WE LIST AS COMPATIBLE AND APPROVED CHANNELS WITH SIXTHFLT IN OUR E AND E PLAN (THIS HAD WORKED DURING MARCH 1973 FLOODS. BOTH OUR EFFORTS FAILED. TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION WITH GAETA WAS OUT AND WE WERE TOTALLY UNABLE MAKE ANY KIND OF CONTACT ON SSB CHANNELS AND FREQUENCIES (CHANNEL 1-4475 KC, CHANNEL 2-6767 KC, CHANNEL 3-8160 KC, CHANNEL 4-11410
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ALL LSB). EVENTUALLY WE WERE ABLE ESTABLISH CLUMSY RADIO-TELEPHONE CONNECTION VIA KENITRA BUT WE WOULD

NOT WANT TO RELY ON THAT PARTICULAR CIRCUIT AGAIN.

3. WHEN IT CLEAR VOICE COMMUNICATIONS NOT SATISFACTORY WE SENT OFF FLASH MESSAGE VIA DIPLOMATIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM (DTS) WHICH, AS REF (A) CORRECTLY REPORTS, DID REACH INTENDED RECIPIENT PROMPTLY. FROM OUT POINT OF VIEW, HOWEVER, EVEN THIS SYSTEM DID NOT WORK AS SMOOTHLY AS WE WOULD LIKE. ONE MESSAGE WAS REPEATED FOUR TIMES BEFORE WE COULD OBTAIN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT FROM ALL ADDRESSEES. ANOTHER WAS DELAYED 112 MINUTES BY CIRCUIT PROBLEMS. SERVICE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR OUR 6955 TOOK UP TO FIVE HOURS TO REACH US. RESULT WAS SOME DOUBT ON OUR PART WHETHER OUR MESSAGES WERE BEING RECEIVED, LET ALONE WHETHER SIXTHFLT COULD HELP. THIS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO US SINCE WE HAD ONLY JUST EXPERIENCED SITUATION WHEREIN MESSAGE ON DIFFERENT SUBJECT TO COMSIXTHFLT HAD NEVER BEEN RECEIVED.

4. DIFFERENT KIND OF PROBLEM AROSE WITH ARRIVAL HELICOPTERS. THIS WAS CAUSED BY INCOMPATIBILITY HELICOPTER RADIOS WITH TUNIS-CARTHAGE AIRPORT TOWER AND WITH ANY COMMO EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE TO EMBASSY. THERE WAS NO RELIABLE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN VARIOUS GROUND STATIONS MANNED BY EMBASSY PERSONNEL (EMBASSY, TUNIS AIRPORT, SOUSSE AIRPORT) AND HELICOPTERS, EXCEPT BETWEEN EMBASSY AND TUNIS AIRPORT USING EMBASSY EQUIPMENT (TELEPHONE LUCKILY DID WORK BETWEEN TUNIS AND SOUSSE, BUT THIS RATHER ACCIDENTAL.)

5. ACTION REQUESTED: TO AVOID SIMILAR PROBLEMS IN FUTURE, WE SUGGEST FOLLOWING:

A) SIXTHFLT HEADQUARTERS PROVIDE US WITH THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS (IF ANY) FOR TELEPHONIC CONTACT BETWEEN EMBASSY AND THEIR HEADQUARTERS WHEN DIRECT TELEPHONIC CONTACT IS NOT POSSIBLE (E.G. WHEN COMMERCIAL LINES ARE OUT IN GAETA AREA). WE MAY NOT TRY THIS AGAIN DURING DISASTERS, BUT YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE USEFUL TO US FOR E AND E PURPOSES.

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B) WE EXPLORE JOINTLY WITH CINCEUR/SIXTHFLT WAYS AND MEANS OF ESTABLISHING COMPATIBLE SSB CHANNELS AND FREQUENCIES (WHICH APART FROM DISASTER RELIEF QUESTIONS, ARE ESSENTIAL TO US FOR E AND E PURPOSES). WE WOULD WELCOME VISIT OF TECHNICIAN FROM EITHER ADDRESSEE FOR THIS PURPOSE.

C. IN EVENT OF FUTURE USE OF HELICOPTERS FOR RELIEF WORK, HELICOPTERS BRING WITH THEM SUFFICIENT COMMO EQUIPMENT TO ESTABLISH COMPATIBLE FIELD

COMMUNICATIONS AMONG CONTROL TOWER AT TUNIS AIRPORT,
BASE POINT OF OPERATIONS IN FIELD, OPERATIONAL AREA
AT THIS AIRPORT, POSSIBLE RELAY POINT, AND HELICOPTERS.

D) WE WOULD ALSO BE GRATEFUL IF COMMUNICATORS
WOULD BE REMINDED OF NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE FLASH AND
IMMEDIATE PRECEDENT MESSAGES PROMPTLY.

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